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Alone in the Woods



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Chapter 1 by Aaron Balaky

I was walking alone in the woods on a sweltering July day. I then noticed a break in the beautiful canopy above. While I was pondering what it looked like I heard a twig snap. I spun around and standing there in front of me was a green clothed man. I wondered why a green clothed man would be standing in front of me in the middle of the forest.

Chapter 2 by Aaron Balaky



Then the green clothed man lunged for me but I grabbed a stick and whacked the man in the face. He said, "No please don't hit me again!" "Who are you?", I asked. His name was Bob. "What do you want with me!?", I exclaimed. "I need you to help me with something very special", he said. I asked him very slowly, "What do you want with me?"

Chapter 3 by intellikat



He produced a stick of his own and whacked me directly in the face. "Ow!" I cried. "Doesn't feel so good, does it?" he said. So I went ahead and hit him again in the face with my stick, though he had asked me not to. This time the man did not cry out but simply struck me in the face with his stick. At this point, my face was beginning to hurt, so I just dropped the stick and said, "Ok Ok you win." The man paused, hit me in the face with his stick again, and then dropped it. "Just to be even," he said. "Now. What I need you to do is help me figure out how to get this bear trap off my ankle." I looked down, and there was a big, rusty bear trap clapped on his bleeding ankle. It was at that moment that I felt quite badly about hitting him so many times in the face with a stick. He must have known what I was thinking, because he patted me on the shoulder and grinned.

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"Don't feed 'em," Bob said, holding up a hand. "It's not good for them. They're a bit odd, you know. Well, you probably don't."

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He didn't wait for the answer, he already trusted me somehow. "The thing is, I don't feel the pain. I never did. Since I was born." Now he was more anxious even before. He was checking around the woods like anybody but us could appear.

I stared him as he comes closer to me.

"You may think this is a gift from God. But it's much like a curse. Imagine how cruel kids are? Oh, so many tortures! Not that adults are more gracious. Yes, I may not be feeling the pain on my skin, but I feel it in my heart!", he burst into tears.

I kept on staring at him. Bob took a deep breathe. "I am NEVER going back to the city." he said, while pointing his finger at my nose. "So... Are you gonna help me about that bear trap, or not?". At this time I was, frozen by what I heard, hardly speaking. I could just whisper.

"How long have you been living alone in the woods?"

Chapter 5 by intellikat



Bob moved closer to me again. Every time he moved, he dragged the giant, rusty metal bear trap along the leaf-strewn ground with an almost mournful noise. I wondered if I should just go ahead and help him get it off, but instead I decided to listen to his story.

"I was born on the farm of my maternal grandfather in Nine Mile, Saint Ann Parish, Jamaica, to Norval Sinclair Marley and Cedella Booker. My father was a British-born European-Jamaican from Sussex England, whose family had Syrian Jewish origins. He claimed to have been a captain in the Royal Marines, though at the time of his marriage to my mother, an African-Jamaican then 18 years old, he was employed as a plantation overseer. Though I was named Nesta Robert Marley, a Jamaican passport official would later reverse my first and middle names. My father provided financial support for our family but seldom saw us as he was often away. I attended Stepney Primary and Junior High School which serves the catchment area of Saint Ann. In 1955, when I was 10 years old, my father died of a heart attack at the age of 70."

I looked at the man, standing there in his green t-shirt, simple clothing, and long dreadlocks now ending in thick joints.

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He went on. "Neville Livingston and I (later known as Bunny Wailer) had been childhood friends in Nine Mile. We had started to play music together while at Stepney Primary and Junior High School. I left Nine Mile with my mother when I was 12 and moved to Trenchtown, Kingston. My mother and Thadeus Livingston (Bunny Wailer's father) had a daughter together whom they named Pearl, who was a younger sister to myself and Bunny. Now that Livingston and I were living together in the same house in Trenchtown, our musical explorations deepened to include the latest R&B from American radio stations whose broadcasts reached Jamaica, and the new Ska music. The move to Trenchtown was proving to be fortuitous, and I soon found myself in a vocal group with Bunny Wailer, Peter Tosh, Beverley Kelso and Junior Braithwaite. Joe Higgs, who was part of the successful vocal act Higgs and Wilson, resided on 3rd St., and his singing partner Roy Wilson had been raised by the grandmother of Junior Braithwaite. Higgs and Wilson would rehearse at the back of the houses between 2nd and 3rd Streets, and it wasn't long before I (now residing on 2nd St), Junior Braithwaite and the others were congregating around this successful duo. The others and I didn't play any instruments at this time, and were more interested in being a vocal harmony group. Higgs was glad to help us develop our vocal harmonies, although more importantly, he had started to teach me how to play guitar—thereby creating the bedrock that would later allow me to construct some of the biggest-selling reggae songs in the history of the genre."

"I think I'll go ahead and help you get that beartrap off now," I said.

Chapter 6 by Gounaitory



Bob sounded very convincingly to me with all of his family story, but still there was something inside of me which made me to beware of him. "I always had trust issues, however, that was about me not about Bob" I thought for a while and carefully took that stick from him and started gently to palp the rusty bear trap.

"No worries" I said, though Bob didn't say anything he was just watching me carefully
"It's good that it is not hurting you. That means that we got enough time to figure out how to get rid off it" I added and smiled to him.

~~"Here, not so far away there is an abandoned farm, close to the field"~~ he answered and pointed

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[Chapter 7 by Intellect](#)



We waited until nightfall because it was more ballsy to do so. As we waited for the last traces of sunlight to disappear beyond the horizon, Bob spoke.

"I remember when we used to sit in a government yard in Trenchtown,"

I looked over at Bob. His eyes were far away, recalling something from his past.

"Observing the hypocrites mingle with the good people we meet."

I kicked at a loose stone with my foot. "I know man, I know," I said. "You can't trust nobody these days. But we've got to stick together. We will get thought this. "For a moment, I wondered why I was helping Bob. I mean, I had just been taking a summer walk in the woods, but now I had decided to join a stranger in some kind of quest to find a farm.

"And then Georgie would make the fire lights, I say, logwood burnin' through the night. Then we would cook cornmeal porridge, of which I'll share with you."

"No, it's okay bro. I'm not really that hungry yet."

"My feet is my only carriage, so I've got to push on through."

"Yeah, you and me both, Bob. Let's hit it."

I stood, and we began to head across the woods for the open field. Suddenly, an enchanted scarecrow dipped down into view and clutched at Bob with his straw-filled gloves. Bob screamed, and I (I am ashamed to admit), turned tail and ran directly home.

Chapter 8 by intellikat



Looking back upon the event years later from the comfort of my soft recliner, a cup of steaming frap in one hand and a dog whistle in the other, I wondered whether it was all a dream? The episode flowed like sludge down the side of a rusty shovel, slipping into a pit of my own digging. Were there creatures below in the gloom, watching their doom approaching inch by slippery

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And so I lit a stick of peppermint and inhaled deeply. I wondered where old Bob was now, and whether he had ever reached his farm or not. I wondered why life seemed so short in this universe-- a scant eight chapters. I wondered if it were possible to snip the marionette strings of a multi-authored existence and live eternal, with no draft for the last chapter to end the dance that was mine.

I put down my things, I pulled the lever on the recliner, and I hot-stepped my way back to my bedroom, where my wife lay sleeping. A gentle dusting of snow was attaching itself to the window and for a moment all was... perfect.

We are all alone in the woods. We are all caught in a rusty beartrap, rhyming our way against reggae basslines to try and make sense of this thing life. My wife was pregnant, and I felt a swelling of my own, sensing that life had yet more in store for me.

In another story, perhaps.

I whacked myself in the face for old times' sake, and fell asleep peacefully to the sound of Depeche Mode over a bluetooth speaker.

the end

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